

March 23, 2020

Honourable Scott Fielding  
Minister of Finance  
Room 103, Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Fielding,

As you know, our province is facing a number of unprecedented challenges in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am writing to you today to call attention to the urgent need to put a plan in place for workers compensation coverage for Manitobans who are exposed to COVID-19 infections on the job.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is calling on the Government of Manitoba and the Workers Compensation Board to immediately move to provide presumptive coverage for all Manitoba workers who are infected with COVID-19 through the course of their employment.

Many workers throughout Manitoba have no choice but to continue to go work through this unprecedented health emergency. Even with many in isolation or practicing self-distancing, we are all still relying on many different types of workers to attend their jobs to provide health care services, operate grocery stores and pharmacies, deliver meals, transport essential goods, and maintain vital transit, infrastructure, community and emergency services, as well as other desperately needed services like child-care and flying Canadians home from abroad.

Many are putting themselves at greater risk to exposure to COVID-19 to help us all. We owe it to them to provide presumptive workers compensation coverage for all workers who contract COVID-19 during the course of their employment.

This necessary protection for workers is important, both to provide financial security for workers who contract COVID-19, and to provide Manitobans with confidence in the services they need throughout this pandemic. This would ensure that workers are not afraid of losing their income if they contract the disease, and it would provide some assurance that they can continue to provide for their families if they are required to self-quarantine or seek hospitalization.

This type of presumptive coverage is not without precedent in our province: Manitoba has already enacted presumptive WCB coverage for work-related PTSD, and *Bill 21: The Workers Compensation Amendment Act*, which you have introduced in the Legislature, proposes the establishment of a Schedule of Presumptive Occupational Disease.

Keeping our province going means protecting the workers who are doing things as essential as working long hours in hospitals and other health care facilities, providing child care, keeping the lights on, responding to emergencies, driving buses, and making sure we don't run out of food.

In Solidarity



Kevin Rebeck  
President Manitoba Federation of Labour

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